

EPISODE 120: FACEBOOK CHANGES AND WHAT THEY MEAN FOR AUTHORS – WITH MARK DAWSON

Speaker 1: Two writers, one just starting out, the other a bestseller. Join James Blatch and Mark Dawson and their amazing guests as they discuss how you can make a living telling stories. There's never been a better time to be a writer.

James Blatch: Yes, hello and welcome to the Self-Publishing Formula Podcast with James and Mark on a Friday, broadcasting here from the United Kingdom around the world to our loyal and wonderful SPF community. It is a great community of 99.9% supportive, lovely people.

Mark Dawson: 95.6%, yes.

James Blatch: Very, very rarely do we get a ...

Mark Dawson: Very rarely, yeah.

James Blatch: Occassionally someone throws their toys out of the pram. I know I, as a struggling writer, I think I've moved on from aspiring to struggling, really appreciate the support I get.

I get a little bit of shoring up and pushing on, particularly from Sasha Black at LBF, who made me shake hands and set a date. But generally, people just have sympathy. They want to know what your issues are and they talk about stuff.

You talk about their writing and people just want each other to get on and be successful and there aren't that many industries. I mean, on the face of

it, actors are all supportive of each other. But they all hate each other and they become incredibly jealous when someone's successful. That's a slight generalization.

But I do genuinely feel in our industry people want each other to be successful and I really appreciate that.

Mark Dawson: I think so too. It has always been a fairly collaborative, friendly industry and one I enjoy being a part of.

Just before we go on, in case people can hear, I've had to move offices today. So I'm in the front of the two offices that I kind of do my work out of and I'm right next door to a quite busy road. So you may get a little bit traffic noise, rumbling across as we do the podcast today.

James Blatch: You're in the south wing. We can hear a little bit of traffic noise. But that's absolutely fine.

We've got a few things to start with. One of the things we want to do is a Patreon update, just welcome our latest Patreon supporters. You can support this podcast if you go to patreon.com/spfpodcast.

We want to say a very warm welcome to Jamie Ferguson from Boulder, Colorado, from Elaine Bateman from the west midlands here in the UK, to Jillian Truic, who I think it says in brackets Barbara Gaskill Denvill, I suspect is her author name, from Victoria in Australia, Jillian Duff from Angus in Scotland. Isn't Angus a great town name for Scotland? And from Dragona Munitic.

Mark Dawson: Apologies.

James Blatch: Well, talking about apologies, I am going to apologize to...

Mark Dawson: To the English language?

James Blatch: Yeah, to the English language. To Niney Hammond who, for some years now, we have called Ninny.

Mark Dawson: You have.

James Blatch: I have. I have. Niney is a very early member of the SPF community. I think she may have been one of the founder purchasers of Ads for Authors, the Ads for Authors cause and Niney's been very supportive and is a Patreon member and I welcomed her in traditional fashion by mispronouncing her name, Ninny, and I'm here to correct it. So Niney, you're very welcome. Thank you for being a part of us and thank you for supporting us on Patreon. It makes a big difference to Mark and me.

Mark, let's have a few updates from you. We should say this is a master class episode. So there's no interview. The interview is effectively with Mark.

He's gonna bring us up to date on what we need to know about Facebook, Facebook advertising. There's been quite a few changes in that area and a little bit of a mix in with some headline news that's gone around the world on bits and there's always a bit of a flurry of panicky emails and posts that go around when these things happen. But Mark's going to set the record straight and calm nerves, I think, today.

Before we do that, let's just talk about your own career, Mark because you've had an interesting year, to say the least after a fairly big decision to go to KU, go back into exclusive with Amazon and I think it's fair to say you haven't looked back.

But you can update us on that and your latest book, Redeemer, number 12, I think, in the Milton series.

Mark Dawson: That's right. So that came out on the first of May. So I've had about, as we record this, it's the 21st. So I've had 21 days of sales on that book and it's been a really successful launch.

For the first time, actually, I did a pre-order. I don't normally launch with pre-orders. But I decided to give it a try. It was a wide launch to start with. So the first, the book is everywhere at the moment. Eventually, it will probably go into KU.

I ran pre-orders across all platforms and just the Amazon sales, I just checked, this doesn't include Apple, or Barnes and Noble, which have also been quite good.

It sold just a touch over 5,700 copies at the time of this podcast and has brought in just shy of \$30,000. So it's been a very strong launch, stronger than the last one, I think, not having checked that properly. But I think it's stronger than the last one and that should now be set for fairly consistent sales maybe for the rest of the year.

I mean, the last two Milton books, The Jungle and Blackout still sell between 30 and 40 copies a day and have been consistent sales all the way since they were released last year.

So this one has started off a little better than both of those, which should hopefully mean that it's consistent for good sales for the rest of the year, certainly.

James Blatch: That's fantastic and in terms of Kindle Unlimited, you've posted some of your figures into the group so far.

You're still happy with the decision you made there?

Mark Dawson: Yeah, I was extremely happy and I was about to just check what the current state of play is. But I think it's something like \$400,000 this year, just in terms of Amazon sales. That doesn't include other platforms.

Some books are still available everywhere and doesn't include things like print, audiobooks and that kind of stuff. So on track for seven figure year this year, which would be pretty astonishing really and, yeah, really, really pleased with how it's gone.

I've been very, very pleased with the response that it's had from readers and I haven't had too many ... I've had very, very few emails from readers. There we go. There goes my book report chime.

James Blatch: When you're in Mark's office the book reports.

Mark Dawson: I haven't had too many emails from readers complaining that they couldn't get it. So that's one of the things I was very worried about. But it hasn't really happened yet.

It's not for everyone. As I always say, I'm a big supporter of the other platforms and KU is not for everyone for sure. But it's worth looking into. It's a viable option and it's been good for me.

James Blatch: Sort of more official training on this, you do talk extensively about both exclusive and wide and the pros and cons and allow people to make their own decision.

I did see we had an email this week, somebody confused, thinking you've always recommended going wide, now in KU. But actually, that's not been the case.

You've always said, "These have been my decisions," and at the time you did the course, you were wide. But you still explained the prod and cons of

both and just because exclusive is working for you, does not mean it worked for other people.

Mark Dawson: No, absolutely not and there are plenty of issues with KU at the moment with page counts being apparently unilaterally cut and people getting flagged for suspicious account promotion activity when they say that nothing suspicious was done. So there are issues.

Amazon has a difficult line to follow with this when KU has been attacked by scammers and Amazon constantly trying to stay in touch with the scammers to try and shut them down. But these are clever people.

Amazon closes one leak hole and they open another one. So Amazon is always trying to chase them and there have been authors who've been caught up in that situation.

So, yeah, that's another thing to just bear in mind, just you take all these things into account when you make your own decision.

I'm agnostic about how you sell book. The bottom line is I just want to get my books into the hands of as many readers as possible and if I can pay the mortgage at the same time, then everyone's happy. It's something for everyone to think about.

I think about with your books, when we all decide what we're going to do with yours.

James Blatch: Yes. Big decision. Big when as well. A million dollars a year does help pay your mortgage.

Mark Dawson: I just moved house.

James Blatch: Yeah, you have got a big house. Just one final note on that because you talk about the revenue.

What sort of advertising spend are you on at the moment?

Mark Dawson: Yeah, about 10%, between 10 and 15% I think at the moment. So yeah, perhaps a touch more than that, between 10 and 20%.

I think last month, I cleared about \$100,000 and spent about \$20,000 in advertising. So it's in that kind of ratio, trending a touch down now. But it will be in that ballpark.

James Blatch: So you're looking at maybe \$200,000 spend on the year.

Mark Dawson: Something like that. Yeah, it will be in that ballpark. We'll talk about, I mean, the places I'm spending, Facebook and Amazon, chiefly, we can talk about at least the former in today's episode.

James Blatch: Okay, well, one more thing just to touch on before we go into the masterclass fully, which is GDPR.

Last week, we had our GDPR episode. I think it might rank as one of the most downloaded episodes we've ever had. I think it probably will end up there because it's a key issue.

I've had lots and lots of conversations and discussions with people about GDPR and I'm currently doing it for a couple of small organizations that I do some voluntary work for at the moment because everyone's obviously effected by this.

There is without question, and one of my friends is a very senior IT guy with a large music industry company, global music industry company to remain nameless, and he likens this very much to the Y2K area.

There is a lot more panic, an unjustified amount of panic next to really what changes are there and it's not going to be the end of the world in a couple

days time on the 25th of May. But first of all, I think our podcast by design or accident did the right thing in that it exposed the areas you need to think about.

It gave people the information. But what it didn't say is a very kind of 0101, which is you are getting a little bit of that and the people are saying you definitely need to email your whole list to get them to stay on. So hopefully, that episode is the right one.

We've had lots of very positive feedback about that. So thank you very much indeed and I hope you're plotting your own way through that. Have we got anything to add on GDPR at the moment?

We should say that that PDF is a very useful bit of paper. We should just let people know again that if you've missed the episode, I would really listen to it from last week and you go then to selfpublishingformula.com/gdpr and you can download it.

It's three parts, really. There's the legal advice that we got, we paid for, few thousand pounds, a few thousand dollars paid for, which you get for free, which is quite conservative, I say, with a lawyer's interpretation.

You've got our interpretation, which is a little bit looser, more specifically around authors and what's going to be most efficient, we think for you, caveated that it's our interpretation and finally, there's a privacy policy, which is GDPR compliant, which you're happy to copy, paste and adapt for the future.

Mark Dawson: Nothing really much to add onto that, just that my inbox continues to be flooded with emails from everyone about do I want to stay on their lists, which as we've suggested, not really necessary and might even in some cases be in breach of the regulations, which is all quite amusing.

The story is a big one now. It was covered in the BBC not too long ago. It's been in all the national newspapers over here because everyone is getting these emails.

It isn't the case of just a few people. We're all getting dozens of emails from the lists that we signed up to and forgot about 10 years ago. The more I think about it, I'm still fairly relaxed about it, I think the important thing just to kind of reiterate what we said in the episode was just think about consent.

Put yourself in the position of a subscriber to your list. Are you being completely transparent as to what they are signing up for? Are you making it clear that in addition to a free book, you are going to add them to the mailing list?

That's the main thing, really, and then also with that in mind, just look back at your mailing list sources, sources of subscribers and just think, was that consent clear at the time they signed up?

I've done that with mine and all of mine are double opt in and always have been. The only ones I'm not confident about are Instafreebie signups and that's because there have been some issues with ... not issues, really, but just very often added people. This was the way that the platform works and that it wasn't necessarily clear that you were joining a mailing list in addition to getting your free book.

James Blatch: Well, I think it is now. I don't know when they changed it. But I checked this recently for us.

I think it is now a separate check box because if I go to our Instafreebie account, there are two lists. There's the ones who opted into receiving emails from the author and ones who didn't, who got the book without opting in. So that must be clear.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, it just means it's the question of going in and looking into it. I know that with some, there have been quite a few comments in our Facebook group about people who are not comfortable with that source.

One thing to add to that is even with, say, if you can segment your subscribers who have come from a place like Instafreebie, if you're not confident about the consent or did they know what they were signing up for, something like MailChimp will enable you to select US or non-EU subscribers and just take them out of ... They're not relevant to the equation.

They're only relevant if they're in the EU. GDPR doesn't cover US subscribers. So even in that worst case scenario, say you've got 2,000 people on an Instafreebie list, maybe only 400 of them are in the EU and those are the only ones that you really need to be concerning yourself about. Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater when you're cleaning your lists like this.

James Blatch: No, absolutely. Well, you can still post your questions into our community groups and good sources of information in there and people weighing in with their experiences and one person who's become a little bit jaded and deluded by ... Deluded? No, jaded. I'll just go with that.

About this whole GDPR fracas is Kevin Partner, who's another longtime and very welcome member of the SPF community and Kevin, I think was getting a bit fed up having to firefight in the Facebook group for people who are throwing their arms up in the air and panicking about it unnecessarily and he suddenly had this idea that he wanted to do something positive in the whole GDPR area.

So I think, Kevin, for a living develops WordPress sites and he's been going through and adding the cookie bar and privacy policy to lots of his client's sites.

He's recorded a 10 minute video of doing that so that people who manage their own WordPress sites, I know lots of you have WordPress author based websites, you can follow that video and you can then upload, you can update the cookie bar and update your privacy policy to be GDPR compliant, just following along with that video and what he wants to do, Kevin, is for anybody who gets that video, you do that in return for making a donation to the Tommy ... I'm gonna get Tommy's surname right. You know how to pronounce Tommy's surname.

Mark Dawson: Bondavand.

James Blatch: Bondavand, yeah. Slightly unusual name.

Tommy is fighting pretty late stage cancer at the moment, doing brilliantly. He's a wonderful human being who has a great courageous way of taking on this illness, which is really dilapidating him at the moment. But we touch every bit of wood around here, hoping that Tommy's going to get through.

The Just Giving campaign has been set up. We've mentioned it before. So there is a link actually right at the top of our community Facebook group. So if you're not already a member, why are you not a member of our Facebook group?

You need to go to [Facebook.com/groups/spfsecretgroup](https://www.facebook.com/groups/spfsecretgroup) or just search for Self Publishing Formula Community on Facebook and it's the pinned post right at the top from Kevin Partner and you will see all the details there.

There's a link to the Just Giving page for Tommy and then you will get the video sent to you after making your donation. So thank you, Kevin, for doing that and there's a very useful video. I've watched the video myself. We don't operate ... I don't touch WordPress sites. John Dyer does that.

But it's a very good step-by-step instructional video, very much in line with what we do here at SPF, which is to teach people how to do things themselves.

Kevin, thank you very much indeed for that. Okay, so that's GDPR hopefully for now. The actual D-Day is a four days away as we speak at the moment. It's actually going to be Friday. Is that the day this podcast goes out? It could be.

Mark Dawson: Yeah.

James Blatch: I think it is. I think it's Friday. So there you go. Let's not panic about that anymore.

Facebook has changed quite a lot. Obviously, they tweak and they tinker. But one of the bigger changes that happened over the last year and I say years. It's slightly fluid because it's got rolled out slowly was the end of the Power Editor.

Now we should say when you initially wrote the course and you taught, you said to people not to use the ads manager because it wasn't sophisticated enough, but to use the Power Editor, where you could really optimize your campaigns and tweak them.

And then Facebook did what actually looks like a fairly sensible thing, which is not to have two competing platforms, slightly different, but to create an all singing and dancing ads manager.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, it was always coming. I mean, it had been planned for two or three years.

The Power Editor was retired ... when would it have been? Maybe six or seven months ago and it rolls out slowly so that not everyone has the new ads manager at the same time, which is always very difficult when you're

doing a course and you're trying to teach people how to use a platform when you don't know exactly what version of the platform they're looking at when they're trying to follow along. But that's all happened now. It's finished.

The Power Editor has been depreciated. So you can't get it anymore and everything runs off the new ads manager and one of the things we do with the course is if you have it and things like that and then we record all of the content again so that it is up to date.

So content is up to date and it does now reflect the fact that you don't need to use the Power Editor. People were worried about that. I was a bit worried about it.

I taught myself how to use a Power Editor, became very familiar with it. I knew how to do everything that I need to do quickly and efficiently, but had a few nerves about losing that and moving onto a new interface.

But they were misplaced. It's very, very simple.

The Ads Manager is sophisticated now. It's easier to do everything that you used to do with Power Editor and also, you don't need to jump into a different interface when you want to check your metrics or to modify campaigns. It's all under the same dashboard. So much, much easier to do that and certainly nothing to worry about.

But we occasionally get people saying that they don't understand how to use the interface. But it is pretty straightforward now.

James Blatch: I think it looks good as well, the new ads manager. So another thing then, so there's been every now and again, there's a bit of publicity about a change that either Facebook makes or more recently, and we'll move onto this one laterally, something that's effected Facebook

externally in the way that the ads platform or the organic reach has been used.

Now one of those changes that Facebook made is they tweaked the way that pages were reaching people's posts from pages, which are effectively businesses and we have our author pages as we've got to have one, haven't you, to run your ads platforms. So you must have one.

How the posts from there reached into people's timelines organically as opposed to posts from groups and of course, as opposed from posts from other personal accounts and again, there was a kind of some area of panic about this saying that that's the end of it. Facebook party's over. We won't be able to promote our businesses on Facebook.

But that's not quite what they were trying to do and isn't quite what they've done.

Mark Dawson: No, I mean, they've been reducing reach for a long time. So five or six years ago, you'd have really wide reach.

Let's put personal profiles aside for the minute. They're not really relevant to what we're doing.

When you set up a business page, an author page, and you try to reach your readers, the reach would have been much, much higher than it is these days. It also would have been free. So Facebook, golden age, five years ago for free, organic reach, very easy to reach.

Now that obviously was never going to be sustainable. Facebook is a business. It's there to make money for its shareholders and once they build a platform up to a significant size, it was fairly obvious that they were gonna switch on the functionality that you have to pay in order to reach the same number of people and it's been something that reach has been declining

organically for the last three or four years and it has got to stage now where it is very, very low.

If you were to just pop into a post on your Facebook page, announcing your new book and you did no spend on that at all, it would have a minimal reach.

I wouldn't say it's not worth doing. But it certainly will lead to not as many people as would previously have heard about it.

So bearing all that in mind, and this has caused a bit of a fuss. I mean, I've seen some fairly well known internet marketers, there's one in particular I won't name, but he has one or two million followers on his Facebook page.

He posted a bit of a rant about Facebook was spearing him. He'd built this page up and now he was basically saying that they were blackmailing him because he had to pay to reach the people he'd paid to build on the page.

The guy who runs the SPF advertising, so I don't do the advertising anymore for the SPF side of things. We've got a guy called Deepesh who does it for us. He's been on the podcast before and knows more about Facebook ads than I do and he posted to this guy and said, "You need to be moving to groups. Pages don't work or you have to pay,"

And this guy reacted quite badly and it was actually a bit racist, which was all very unpleasant.

But the point is, as Deepesh tried to explain to him is that there are other ways to actually to the same effect, you just need to be prepared to learn what the changes are and then adapt to them.

So the simplest way, there's two ways really and the first way is to understand that you have to pay to reach the same number of people again. But that's fine.

If you learn how to do it properly, it's still a very, very profitable platform to use and obviously, that's what the course teaches or the Facebook module of the ads for all this cost. The other way to do it is to move to groups. So Facebook groups have also been around for quite a lot time.

But they have at the moment, a bigger, organic reach than pages do, at least in my experience.

So what I've done is I've set up the, I think it's called All Thriller, No Filler, the Mark Dawson Reader's Group. Now it's connected to my page. There's a post on my page, probably pinned most of the time that directs people to join the group. They use a secret or closed groups.

They need to apply to join, just the same as the Facebook community that we have. People apply. I am admin. They get added in or I get my VA to add them in and as soon as they are on board, they then get the message that I put out a little bit more easily and I don't have to pay to do that and you can have groups upon groups.

The one thing I'm doing next month, we promise to do a podcast on this a bit later on. But I'm going to be doing a book club. So it's going to read through the Milton books with me in real time, one a month.

This will be a way to drive sales in the first in the series and then second in the series, etc, and I will answer questions. I'll tell people by way of blog posts, Facebook videos what I was thinking when I wrote the books.

I'm running that one, the first one through a new group just dedicated to *The Cleaner*, which is the first book in the series and that has a pretty good, organic reach. So it's a pretty good way now to get around the fact that organic reach is declining.

It's to start to moved towards groups. You're starting to see that now with other people getting into that space and I would recommend that for authors as well.

James Blatch: Okay, so is it fair to summarize and say that a page is something that you need to engage in Facebook business side of things? But the page should be looked at as that, the platform for you to run your ads campaigns and a little bit else.

A group is somewhere where you can build a fan base and reach people more easily and you shouldn't rely on the page for that.

Mark Dawson: Yeah and the page is still worth having for the limited organic reach that is has.

But I would say generally speaking, most of my contact these days is through the group.

You will need the page to advertise. But I'd start to look at having a group as well.

James Blatch: And also to be fair to Facebook. I mean, you did say at the beginning that they're a business and ultimately, they're going to reduce how much you can do for free as a business.

Another side of this, and you genuinely believe them, is that they had an eye on what the user experience was like in Facebook and it was getting to a point where you would have these newspaper quizzes or links for newspapers or media groups or HuffPo or whoever it was filling up your timeline. And they quite easily found you through your interests promoted from their page.

What Facebook wanted to get back to was posts from your friends and family being the dominant thing that you saw there and the things that you had said you were interested in and taken part in.

So for instance, if one of my friends and I are both members of a group and I post into the group or they post into the group, I will get that notification about that. But that's what Facebook's fine about because we both are active in that group.

What it doesn't want is having the timeline filled with rather generic, corporate stuff when really it should be photographs of our friends' dinner or whatever.

And that's what they said it was about and that does appear to have worked to me.

Mark Dawson: I think that was one of the motivations behind it. But I mean, one thing as we're recording this in May, next May, I would be very surprised if we can't advertise into groups.

So people would be able to advertise to my reader group. I think that's quite likely and it might well be that reach in groups goes down.

This is a constantly evolving sphere for us. But if that happens, then there will be another opportunity there that will be moving people towards. So keep subscribing to podcast. When we find things out, we'll pass them on.

James Blatch: In a few months time, there'll be an advert in your group saying, "Do you like Mark Dawson? You're gonna love James Blatch."

Mark Dawson: Yeah, but that's truth in advertising, James. It is entirely possible. Hang on. Your book will need to be out for you to be advertising it.

James Blatch: Well, I should say that a few beers in to our London book fair soiree, I did say that by London Book Fair next year, it will be published.

Mark Dawson: There we go. Let's hold him accountable.

James Blatch: I think I may regret saying that.

Let's move onto engagement campaigns rather than lead generation. What do you mean by that?

Mark Dawson: This is something that we're trying at the moment with SPF.

Lead gen is still great for building your list. It's really convenient. They're simple to set up and more importantly, they're really simple for people to respond to and join your list.

We'll talk about them a little bit later on with regards to GDPR because I think that's something we really didn't touch upon last week or the week before when we did GDPR. So we'll quickly talk about that. There's something that we are going back to.

The old way of doing things was sending people to a landing page. So we started to test that with SPF with the ads that we ran. We ran lots and lots of ads all the time to different things. So the new courses, the cover course with Stewart, the giveaway for GDPR, we've run some ads on that.

There's lots of things that we're always testing and we've been finding that the cost to add someone to our subscription list, the SPF list is probably around about 2.50 pounds, so around about 3.25, \$3.30, something like that, which is much more expensive than it was two years ago when I was doing all these campaigns myself. We were probably looking at between \$1 or 1.50 something like that to build the list in those days.

So it's more expensive just generally. That's just the way it is and we're also fishing in a smaller pool now because we've got a list of about 90,000 authors.

One thing that we thought we'd test would be to just go back to that old method of running people to a landing page and that has been working really well and one wrinkle on that was we would start to run an engagement campaign first of all.

Now what I mean by that is we would test our copy and our creative, our images, in an engagement campaign. So just setting the objective for engagement, rather than traffic or list building or whatever the other objectives we might look to use could be.

We'd be looking to get likes and shares and things like that and by doing that, we can work out quite easily which of the campaigns are working the best, so which audiences are working, which creative combinations are working.

Then once we've got that, we just use that information, turn a new campaign into one that's targeted for traffic and then we send those clicks to a landing page, rather than using lead gen. By doing that, I mean, it's fluctuating all the time at the moment and I just saw in our Slack group this morning that the costs have gone up a little bit.

We were getting sign ups at around about 30 pence on Thursday and Friday. Those costs have gone up to around about 1.50 now. But that's still much cheaper than it has been with lead gen recently.

What I'm saying there is that this is a fairly advanced tactic and this isn't really the form for laying out the kind of the full strategy in great depth.

But what I want people to take away from this is that things that worked in the past might now be working better again than they have been and more

importantly than that, just to have an open mind and to think about testing and experimenting.

If we hadn't gone with this test, then we might have missed out on some really interesting new opportunities that otherwise we would have missed.

James Blatch: Very interesting development there and let's move onto Facebook in the news. It's had a relatively rough ride this year.

Cambridge Analytica is a company based just a few miles away from me here in the UK, who definitely misused data.

I have to say, and I used to work for the BBC and I've got friends who are covering this story and no one has covered it very well. It's very rare to read a newspaper or see a television article about this story and have the facts right because frankly, the journalists don't understand it.

But Cambridge Analytica at the first instance did effectively buy a bunch of likes and contacts who took this quiz and that was where they breached the terms. A lot of the other stuff they did, actually, was just using Facebook and using engagement. But the result of it, even if people can't really explain why, people have taken a bit of a negative take on Facebook.

Now some of that was repaired, I think, by Mark Zuckerberg's appearance at the Senate where he was very calm and very patient with people again who didn't seem to understand.

One them literally asked, "How does Facebook make money then?" Did you hear that question? And he said, "We have adverts." That was the level where that discussion started.

But where do you think we are with Facebook? Is Facebook still trusted from an advertiser's point of view following this scandal, if you want to call it that?

Mark Dawson: I think so. There's so much overreaction about this. Facebook is a learning platform. They're still relatively young in the grand scheme of things.

It hasn't been around for a huge amount of time and they built their massive platform and with that, comes lots of complicated issues that are very difficult to foresee.

And also, the Analytica stuff came ... It was only really relevant, the quiz that they were deploying to build up their information on on subscribers was several years ago.

So you see all this kind of stuff in the papers and you see the campaigns Delete Facebook, all of that kind of stuff. Now we immediately got people in our Facebook group who were all very meta. But they were going, "Oh, this is the end of Facebook advertising. It won't work anymore. No one will see my ads and people will delete Facebook off their phones."

That's kind of gone quite quiet now and it was fairly obvious that that was not going to happen. People are so entrenched in Facebook's ecosystem now, not everyone, not so much the younger people, but people 25, 30 and up.

I think maybe 30 and up. We're pretty much embedded now and I find it quite hard to imagine how things would be without Facebook now.

Other people may be less evolved than I am in terms of business and other connections. But you haven't seen a mass exodus of people from Facebook and you haven't seen as it being any less effective.

Clicks might be slightly more expensive than they used to be. But that's got nothing to do with this kind of stuff. That's just the way it is. But people who are overreacting to this and claiming that it's the end of Facebook

advertising and they need to find somewhere else to advertise their books, that they're overreacting and if they want to get off a platform, that's absolutely fine. I wouldn't try to stop them because it just means that there will be cheaper clicks for the people who stick around.

I think the takeaway, what I want to say with regards to this is kind of something that I've said in previous points that we've covered today is just don't panic. The sky isn't falling.

It's a big story for Facebook. But it shouldn't have too much of an effect on guys like us.

James Blatch: Yeah, absolutely and one of the underlying things I think that happened during that period, certainly with politicians is there was a lot of talk about how Cambridge Analytica managed to influence or effect the general election in the US, the presidential election. And the very fact that you're talking about one small group of people from one company potentially influencing or impacting a presidential election, whilst there was alarm and headlines and the company's perfectly's been dissolved now and there may be prosecutions on the face of it, underneath it, politicians are saying to each other, "Wow. Really? Is this where we are now that social media platforms can reach into people's lives and influence into that lot?" This is the new world order.

Social media is a very important thing. It's a huge foundation and whilst ironing out some of the frailty's of it and some of the flaws is a part and parcel of its growing. I completely agree with you. It's going nowhere.

Mark Dawson: Exactly, and rather than that is obviously it's getting bigger and bigger. So yeah. Don't panic. We should call this the Don't Panic episode.

James Blatch: Don't Panic, Mr. Mallory.

Mark Dawson: Just like the GDPR, don't panic.

James Blatch: Don't panic. It is the Don't Panic and of course, a lovely, touching reference to Douglas Adams.

Finally, so in the list of points that we wanted to raise, we're going to talk again, GDPR. This is with particular reference to lead gen ads and you and I had a little discussion about this because I was a little bit misled.

I think at the time that I was recording and all my research and I'd read from Facebook them saying that they become the data controller with lead gen ads, which effectively they do because they take the email address and they pass it.

So if you're doing anything with the email address, you are the controller and they had satisfied their own privacy concerns with that.

But of course, you write the copy. You write the thing that people are drawn in and clicking on. So that was important and you made that point last week.

You want to say a little bit more about GDPR.

Mark Dawson: It's a bit more than that. You do need to do that, of course and as someone who's owning the list and then processing the list yourself, you need to be completely clear that people are able to give informed consent about what they're actually getting into.

There are lots of ways you could do that. You can include copy in the ad itself. But that, I think, can be a bit unwieldy. Ads are gonna look very unusual if you have an ad say, "Get my new book (and also join my mailing list)," the kinds of stuff that we mentioned a couple weeks ago.

I think the better place to do it is actually when you're using lead gen, it's actually on the lead form itself. So if someone clicks on an ad and the lead form pops up, there are plenty of opportunities on that form where you can make it very clear what they're signing up for. If they haven't signed up at that point, they can make a decision to do so.

They only do that when they click the subscribe button and that's where your best practice should be. That is where you should have your privacy policy.

Facebook gives you the option to link through to your privacy policy and it's not just an opportunity. They flag that you need to be doing that. So that's where you link to a policy like the one that we provided authors with in that handout, selfpublishingformula.com/gdpr.

You can cut and paste that, drop that onto your site and then have jamesblatch.com/privacy and that is where you would be sending people.

So what I'm saying here is just be really open either in your ad or on the lead form, that it's not just a free book. Use that wording that we've had lawyer approved. You can just pinch that if you want to and we're reasonably confident, as confident as we can be at the moment, although, I am not a lawyer.

Just use that wording if you want to. Use the privacy policy. Make sure that everything is compliant and you can either do that in the ad or my preference at the moment is on the lead form itself.

James Blatch: One thing we're going to report on in the future, so I've been doing this. All the emails I've been getting from organizations saying, "Click here to stay on my list, otherwise that's it because of GDPR. You have to go," which, of course, is largely nonsense, I'm not clicking any.

I'm taking this as an opportunity to wind down how many emails I get in that particular folder and I'm placing myself as one of the, I'm gonna guess somewhere between 20 and 60% of people who want to be on the list but don't click because we know when you send an email to people, you get open rates. 25% is a good open rate, 11% not untypical.

People don't open every email and read every email and this is a really dangerous road to go down for commercial organizations. They are going to end up and they may be doing it now, there will be panic in a lot of those organizations who have been misadvised at the beginning and they're now looking at potentially deleting 60% of their list because they said to people ... Yeah, it could be 80% of their list.

Mark Dawson: More. I saw something in the newspaper today and I think it was in The Guardian potentially. It was 10% of people were clicking. So they're potentially losing 90% of their mailing list.

James Blatch: That's the end of some businesses and I've seen some pretty big names, even in our kind of sphere, kind of digital marketing. Well, Land Rover, yeah, have done.

Mark Dawson: I had Land Rover today.

James Blatch: Oh, did you? Yeah. I've had loads and what are they actually going to do now this week? I'm expecting a slew of apology emails in the next couple of weeks saying, "We've taken advice from our lawyers again. It was clear to us that you had consented to be on our lists. So thank you for staying," or something like that. It wouldn't surprise me.

Mark Dawson: It's very weird in that the legislation intended to reduce email spam has multiplied it by about 100.

James Blatch: Yeah, which is definitely not the intended effect.

Mark Dawson: No, I think the Y2K thing is a really relevant comparison because it does remind me of that quite a lot and everyone was like, "Oh my God."

Lucy, my wife, was working, I think, for Walkers crisps in those days and she was paid, this is on the 31st of December, I think she was paid triple or quadruple time to be on call because they thought their systems were going to fall over and of course, absolutely nothing happened. So she got a nice big windfall for that and I think something similar's gonna happen here.

What did I see the other day? The ICO, the Information Commission Office over here was just basically saying that this is kind of its best practice. I can't remember where I read this, but something along the lines of they're not going to be going after people. If you try to do the right thing, that's really what they want.

But it's leading to a lot of confusion, what I'm getting. There's one of our subscribers in particular. I mean, you've seen these messages, James. She has been bombarding people.

James Blatch: Well, it's 25 point questions on the detail of what she should be doing.

Mark Dawson: In fact, in almost being critical of the podcast that we put out, saying that we got it wrong and maybe we did get it wrong. We may have got some bits wrong. But then, everyone is getting a lot of it wrong.

I think all we're doing is just trying to plot the safest courses as we see it, best practice, all of that kind of stuff and we learn more, we'll pass more on.

James Blatch: Yeah and as things settle down, it's important to remember that there are people out there who will buy a CD or, these days, a

download of 2 million email address and then they'll send an email out for a little widget that they're having built in China to everyone.

They are the people who the ICO in the UK and the equivalent bodies around the world want to go after and say, "You have nowhere near complied with this organization and with this legislation," and shut them down as best they can because they'll probably be in a country that's out of reach.

But for people who are doing everything they can to be compliant, and I think Kevin Partner's made this point endlessly, as you have on Facebook, just let people know they're signing up to your list.

Don't get really bogged down in, "They've got to absolutely sign this box, and if they haven't signed the box, perhaps I should go around with a bit of paper and get them to sign a letter to me." Just make it clear to them that they're signing up to your list.

Mark Dawson: Exactly and it's just funny. Some of the things that you see, just before we wrap up on GDPR, I've seen some posts from authors that I think generally know what they're talking about.

But some rants, actually, about the EU being a totalitarian government. These are American authors who are like, "How dare they? What are they gonna do?" Apart from the fact that they can, it would be very simple for the EU to attach a judgment to EU based earnings, so anything authors make from the UK. Well, that's not for too much longer. But anywhere within the EU, it would be quite easy for those earnings to be effectively galled up.

But to compare it with totalitarianism, when really, it's an annoying law because we all are a bit confused by it and it's kind of everyone has been taken slightly by surprise, even though it's been on the cards for years. But just think about it.

As you say, what they're trying to do is to make it more simple to go after people who buy those lists and spam you when there's no question that you haven't consented.

This isn't going after people like us. Generally speaking. Now, of course there are exceptions. But generally speaking, authors are just trying to do the right thing, add people to their lists when it's fairly obvious that that's what's happening. We're not really the target here. It's more egregious offenders that you mentioned.

James Blatch: And you touched a little bit on Brexit there on the position. Obviously, that's a year or so away now and then there's going to be a handover period. I can't remember what that is. Is it another year? Maybe two years?

Mark Dawson: 10 years.

James Blatch: 10 years. Who knows?

The reason we haven't really talked about that is because, guess what. We don't really know. No one in the UK or EU has really sorted out all the details there.

We are clearly going to stay in compliance with large chunks of EU star legislation, whether that's aviation, air traffic control, or GDPR. What precisely that looks like or feels like, we just don't know at the moment. So we'll watch that with the same interest everybody else does in a year's time.

Well, you got your scissors again. We had a conference call this morning and Mark was waving these scissors at us and we thought he's either self harming or threatening, one of the two and now you're sniffing pens.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, before you wrap up, so this episode goes out on Friday the 25th and the reason we recorded this now is because obviously we're getting around to the point where we're putting the final touches on Ads for Authors, which releases for the sixth time and the date for that is, Mr. Blatch?

James Blatch: June the 6th, which is D-Day, the anniversary of D-Day, June the 6th.

Mark Dawson: That's appropriate.

James Blatch: It was gonna be June the 5th, 1944, but the weather was bad. So it was June the 6th. A little bit of history.

Mark Dawson: Thank you very much. Yeah, so that's June the 6th. So it's two weeks from the date of this going out isn't it, pretty much?

James Blatch: Yes, about that.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, about two weeks. So I think it's a Wednesday. So yeah, just a date for your diary. Getting plenty of people asking all the time, people asking when the course is going to be open again. So there's the answer and obviously Facebook is still an important part of the course.

It used to be Facebook Ads for Authors. It's much bigger than that now. Facebook is still a very important part of my advertising platform as we touched on up at the start of things there and Amazon ads is, I would say, an equally important part of the platform now and one of the things that I'm going to be doing in the next two weeks if I can find the time is to rerecord all the content on the Amazon ads part of the course just to bring it up to date with some of the things that I do now that I didn't do then.

So I'll do a lot more product display ads. I do a lot of automatic keywords ads. These are generally very effective, make me a good bit of money and advertising in the UK. There's ways to do that now.

We'll be recording a lot of new stuff. All previous students will get all that for free as is always the case with our new stuff.

But it's just something that I want people to know that if you're interested in the course, it's more than just Facebook. Facebook is still important. But there's much more in the course and you're going to see it on the 6th when we're ready with details and everyone will know about that as soon as we push the button.

James Blatch: We usually add a module at the point of release and this time, it will be Pinterest. So Pinterest for Authors and we've been following this.

We've been really talking about this over the last year and doing some experiments and Pinterest does have an ads platform and I've been experimenting with that. But we know that the organic reach you can get on Pinterest and think of Pinterest as being where Facebook was five years ago.

It is a fertile time for organic reach and Pit Read, who's based in New Zealand at the moment, has, I think she did give me her figures. I'm not necessarily going to quote them on air because I'm not sure how widely she shares them. But they do thousands of dollars of revenue a month and knocking on 80% of their traffic is driven from Pinterest because she has really nailed it.

Pit Read is going to be a guest author, lecturer for us and she's going to the Pinterest for Authors.

I've sent you the curriculum. We've been through that together, Mark, and it looks really good, doesn't it?

Mark Dawson: Yeah, weirdly, James, you might be able to hear this. You've just triggered Alexa.

James Blatch: Oh, have I?

Mark Dawson: She's singing to me. Hang on. Let me move the microphone. That's very weird. Alexa, stop.

James Blatch: What did I ask her to do?

Mark Dawson: I don't know. But she's singing to me in French.

James Blatch: I think Alexa's got a bit of a thing for me. She sings to me quite often. She also interrupts conversations quite a lot.

Mark Dawson: I'm not going to use the A word because we'll trigger people's devices around the world. But I'm a big fan. I've actually got seven of them in the house now and it is just great.

I'm not going to show off some of the things that we do. But robot vacuum cleaners. I can tell the robot vacuum cleaners to start cleaning just by telling them to do it.

James Blatch: We're living in the future. I use it for lights. So it's great for me because the office is in the garden, particularly at night and I walk from the house and tell A to turn the lights on before I get here and then if I've forgotten to turn them off and I've locked up, I can tell her. She turns them off.

We're fans of the tech. Good, okay, so all that's coming up in the future.

We'll have a lot more on Ads for Authors and it will give us an opportunity of course to talk in more detail about advertising nearer the time. But June the 6th is date for your diary and we are, as you say, getting emails at the moment, asking us when it's open again.

So it's gonna be open then and I can also tell you that we are not going to raise the price, despite the fact I think there's going to be eight separate courses now bundled into what was originally just one course on Facebook advertising and the price remains the same as it has done since March 2017.

We try to make it as good a value and there are plenty of people who will tell you that after they've taken it, they very quickly made their money back on that. So it's all about that.

This is not a fluffy course with no discernible, tangible, measuring benefits. This is a course with very tangible, measurable benefits. But yeah, more about that later.

Mark, thank you very much indeed. Thank you for putting up with the traffic, racing to the scene of another chemical incident, no doubt in Salisbury and we did the whole episode without mentioning the royal wedding. Oh, now I've mentioned it.

Mark Dawson: Oh dear. Yes, we did. I was in the cathedral with my children watching it on a big screen and people were applauding when the vows were exchanged. It was all very strange.

James Blatch: Well, it was beautiful. I thought it was beautiful and I did think if ... Well, not if nothing else, but on top of it being a beautiful celebration of love, which I thought was nice, what an advert for the United Kingdom. It was blue skies, castles, princesses. I mean, it made me want to visit Britain.

Mark Dawson: It's always like that.

James Blatch: Yeah, every day. Good, come and visit Britain.

Oh yes, I will actually just throw in one thing because that's coming up soon as well. We are going to be in New York next month, month after, two months in mid-July. So we're gonna be there from about Tuesday the 10th of July through to the Sunday on the 15th, whenever that is.

We're going to be attending Thriller Fest. But we will have a drinks reception in New York City, venue to be decided. But if you can put a date in your diary, perhaps maybe something like the 8th, at the top of my head. That's the Wednesday night. Mark and I will be there.

We may even have with us the much promised pins. We've promised these in the past. Look at that. It's upside down. I'd never make a presenter. There we go. That's perfect. They're beautiful.

They look like Star Trek emblems and we'll be handing these out to people who pitch up and say hello to us in New York. So hopefully, you can come along then. Good, that is it.

Thank you very much indeed for listening for this week. I hope you enjoyed it and got some value at it as always and hope you have a great week writing and a great week selling. Goodbye.

Speaker 1: You've been listening to the Self Publishing Formula podcast. Visit us at selfpublishgformula.com for more information, show notes, and links on today's topics. You can also sign up for our free video series on using Facebook ads to grow your mailing list. If you've enjoyed the show, please consider leaving us a review on iTunes. We'll see you next time.